

a diverse range of problems—including an IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program, a Summer Food Service Program, and a KCEOC Aquatic Club—at their core they are all designed to impact the people of the community in a positive way. This is an objective that the organization continues to achieve, year after year.

When one Kentuckian who benefitted from KCEOC's services was asked what mattered to him the most, he replied:

Getting my education. I had never planned on getting my GED or going to college. [The staff at KCEOC] really pushed me and encouraged me.

I especially want to thank the leadership of KCEOC, including its president/CEO, Mr. Paul D. Dole, who was honored in 2013 as one of the region's top entrepreneurs in Southern and Eastern Kentucky at the 2013 Excellence in Entrepreneurship event, hosted by the Center for Rural Development in Somerset.

For their 50 years of serving the community of Southeastern Kentucky, I ask that my Senate colleagues join me in honoring KCEOC. May their next 50 years be as beneficial to the Commonwealth of Kentucky as their first.

CONGO CONFLICT MINERALS LAW UPDATE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, it is not very often that Congress can make a policy change that has life-or-death consequences for millions of people, but in 2010 a law was enacted that is changing the money supply for warlords in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Many may not realize that almost 5.5 million people have been killed during the long-running conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has been the most deadly since World War II. Tragically, women and children have suffered the most, as we too often see in conflicts. Millions have been displaced from their homes, and the prevalence of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war is almost beyond belief. The U.N. reports that about 1,000 women are assaulted every day in Congo, which is roughly equivalent to 12 percent of all Congolese women.

One of the drivers and funders of this conflict is paradoxically that which fills the DRC with such potential—its natural resources. Instead of paying for the nation's peace, education, roads and public health programs, the DRC's mineral wealth has been siphoned off to fund the armed groups that vie for local and regional control of vast areas far from Congo's capital, Kinshasa.

Tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold are found in everyday electronics, jewelry, airplanes, and manufacturing equipment. But these minerals also have provided weapons and salaries to fighters, including conscripted child soldiers, who then visit unspeakable horrors on innocent civilians in return.

Over 4 years ago, I joined former Senators Brownback and Feingold and

Congressman JIM McDERMOTT in drafting a simple transparency reporting requirement for U.S.-registered corporations that source these four minerals from the DRC or its neighbors. And in early June, after protracted legal challenges, the first of those annual reports was filed at the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The electronics industry, in general, has been out front on this push for great transparency, but sadly, the jewelry industry has lagged far behind on its due diligence and reporting. Some companies have made more than a good-faith effort to determine the origins of the minerals they and their suppliers use, and a few of those companies, I am proud to say, call Illinois home.

One of the leaders, across all industries, on this is Motorola Solutions, headquartered in Schaumburg, IL. Motorola Solutions emerged early as a company dedicated to cleaning up its supply chain, and to do so, it helped establish Solutions for Hope, dedicated to developing a closed-pipe supply chain. Kester, a subsidiary of Illinois Tool Works, makes electronic and automobile components and has been a leader in transparency of the smelters it uses. John Deere, headquartered in Moline, IL, painstakingly described its due diligence processes and even detailed the sources of minerals that its suppliers used. Others, like AAR Corporation, based out of Wood Dale, and Dover Corporation, headquartered in Downers Grove, developed conflict-mineral specific compliance programs and provided detailed information on steps to identify risks in their supply chains. Lake Forest's IDEX Corporation underwent efforts to create a sourcing policy that in its first year of filing covered 90 percent of suppliers.

I am sorry to say not all companies took this reporting requirement seriously, hiding behind the 2-year grace period that allows them to avoid questions. My hope is that these Illinois companies serve as an example for next year's filings nationwide. And here is why—this rule is yielding real, tangible, positive results already.

The Government Accountability Office issued a report in late June that confirmed the opposite of claims made by those seeking to dismantle this reporting requirement. This rule has expanded the options for clean minerals sourcing in Central Africa. In fact, the number of certified conflict-free smelters has more than tripled in the past year alone. Intel has created its first conflict-free computer chip, while using responsibly sourced minerals from Congo and took its reporting a step further by voluntarily submitting it to third-party audits. Under the Conflict-Free Smelter Program, the number of international smelters operating free from conflict minerals continues to grow. Almost 90 smelters (40 percent of the world's total smelters) are certified as conflict-free and more than 150 companies and industry associations participate in the program.

After being refined the origins of the material become difficult to track. Smelters purchase materials from a variety of sources, so the smelter or refiner is a critical point in the supply chain, where we can look for assurances about whether the material has been purchased from conflict-free sources. Apple has confirmed that its entire tantalum supply chain is conflict free. Dutch smart phone manufacturer Fairphone is making its products with conflict-free raw materials. Fairphone has already sold 35,000 units and is hoping to expand production as more consumers embrace conflict-free electronics. Fairphone and others are leading by example and proving that conflict-free is not only possible but that it can be profitable too.

The Enough Project recently reported on the effect of this legislation, and it is good news. Armed groups and the Congolese army are no longer present at 2/3 of tin, tantalum, and tungsten mines surveyed in eastern Congo. It also appears that responsible sourcing initiatives might be contagious—Congo-Brazzaville, the DRC's neighbor to the west, has begun its own program to determine clean sources of minerals as well. I am also happy to say that our counterparts in the European Union are reviewing a bill based on our law to require European companies to provide similar transparency in their own supply chains. China has instituted similar rules, and other nations are following close behind.

The Congress has emerged as a world leader on conflict-minerals reporting, and the early results suggest that the people of the DRC should not have to suffer unspeakable violence that can be traced back to our cell phones, wedding rings, and cars. The filings are far from perfect, but we have begun the process. I appreciate those industry players that are leading the way. I can only hope that by cutting off this rich source of funding for the fighting in the Congo, we can help spare its citizens from the senseless violence that is tearing the country apart.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE WASHINGTON, IL TORNADOES

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, people throughout Illinois have been reflecting this week on the 1-year anniversary of the day that rare November tornadoes tore through Illinois, causing widespread devastation and eight deaths in our State. The outbreak, which happened on November 17, 2013, destroyed hundreds of homes and rendered thousands uninhabitable.

This tornado event was the deadliest and costliest in the State of Illinois for the month of November—and it was the fourth largest outbreak for the State overall. Two of the tornadoes that day rated EF4. That means the winds were more than 166 miles per hour. In fact, the National Weather Service clocked a peak wind of 190 miles per hour on that day. Washington, Gifford,

Brookport, East Peoria, Pekin, the list of cities touched by the tornadoes in the State goes on and on.

I visited Washington, IL, near Peoria, 5 days after the tornado—and Gifford, IL, just a few days after that. What I saw was heartbreaking. In the city of Washington, alone, 1,108 homes were damaged—most were damaged very badly. Five hundred ninety-five of those homes were destroyed. I saw bare foundations where families had lived just days before. Trees had been reduced to splinters. Street signs had been torn out of the ground making it nearly impossible to see where one block ended and another began.

The loss of homes and property was really difficult to bear, but the real tragedy lies in the lives that were claimed. Three people died in Washington, two people died in Washington County near St. Louis, and three were killed in downstate Massac County, which is located along the Ohio River.

It is a miracle more lives were not lost, particularly in the path of the EF4 tornado that touched down in East Peoria, traveled through the city of Washington and continued up to Long Point, IL. In Washington, many lives may have been saved by the fact that so many members of the community were in church when the tornado came through. When the sirens went off, 500 people inside Crossroads United Methodist Church huddled in a storm shelter in the building. Half a mile away, at the Apostolic Christian Church, many of the 450 or so people who were there took refuge in Sunday school rooms. The tornado, spinning at nearly 200 miles per hour changed course by several degrees just seconds before impact and went right between those two churches. Neither church was damaged.

I can't say enough about the tireless efforts the emergency personnel who were there from the minute the sirens went off. They were there to help under the most extraordinary circumstances. I supported Governor Quinn's request for a Federal disaster declaration for 15 counties in the State. The President granted "individual assistance" to people in Champaign, Douglas, Fayette, Grundy, Jasper, LaSalle, Massac, Pope, Tazewell, Vermilion, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, Will, and Woodford Counties. This declaration allowed people in those communities whose homes and businesses were damaged to start repairs and to find temporary housing if they needed it. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided more than \$28 million in loans to the tornado victims. The Small Business Administration also made loans available to businesses in the affected counties. To date, it has provided 305 loans for a total of \$25.8 million.

The people who live and work in the damaged communities have made incredible progress rebuilding. Washington Mayor Gary Manier predicted last year that the city would rebuild within a year. The task proved far greater than anyone would have

thought but the city has made great strides. Building permits have been issued for more than 70 percent of the damaged properties. More than 25 percent of the destroyed homes have been replaced and reoccupied. Work remains to be done but the city has seen enormous progress.

Thousands of volunteers have helped with the cleanup. Ben Davidson, executive pastor at Bethany Community Church, has coordinated volunteer efforts since the early stages. He says volunteers have accounted for 13,000 workdays and 70,000 hours. Although most volunteers have been from central Illinois, people from all over the State continue to show up on weekends to help plant trees and cut weeds on neglected properties. Hearing the stories of Illinoisans working together to help neighbors and even strangers get back on their feet makes me proud to be from Illinois. Thank you to everyone engaged in the rescue and cleanup at every level.

I also want to recognize the hard work and dedication of: Jonathon Monken, head of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency; Gifford Mayor Derald Ackerman; Brookport Mayor John Klaffer; and Metropolis Mayor Billy McDaniel. They were there when their constituents and their communities needed them the most.

I am thinking of all those whose lives were affected by this tragic event. We are rebuilding—as Americans always do—and will be stronger for it.

NOMINATION OF LAUREN MCFERRAN

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, this morning we convened a hearing to consider the President's nomination of Lauren McFerran to fill an impending vacancy on the National Labor Relations Board. Ms. McFerran is well known to most of us as a senior staffer on the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and I look forward to her speedy confirmation. She has been nominated to fill a vacancy that will result from the departure next month of a current Board member, Nancy Schiffer. I would like to thank Ms. Schiffer for her dedicated service. She has been a highly respected Board member, and I wish her every success in her future endeavors.

The National Labor Relations Board is an agency that is absolutely critical to our country, to our economy, and to our middle class. Over 75 years ago, Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act, guaranteeing American workers the right to form and join a union and bargain for a better life. The act sets forth a national policy to encourage collective bargaining. Specifically, the act states:

It is declared to be the policy of the United States to eliminate the causes of certain substantial obstructions to the free flow of commerce and to mitigate and eliminate these obstructions when they have occurred by encouraging the practice and procedure of

collective bargaining and by protecting the exercise by workers of full freedom of association, self-organization, and designation of representatives of their own choosing, for the purpose of negotiating the terms and conditions of their employment or other mutual aid or protection.

For union and nonunion workers alike, the act provides essential protections. It gives workers a voice in the workplace, allowing them to join together and speak up for fair wages and benefits, and for safe working conditions. These rights ensure that the people who do the real work in this country have a shot at receiving a fair share of the benefits when our economy grows—and with rising income inequality in our country, these rights are more important than ever.

The NLRB is the guardian of these fundamental rights. Workers themselves cannot enforce the NLRA, but they can turn to the Board if they have been denied the basic protections provided under the law. In short, the Board plays a vital role in vindicating workers' rights. In the past 10 years, the NLRB has secured opportunities for reinstatement for 22,544 employees who were unjustly fired. It has recovered more than \$1 billion on behalf of workers whose rights were violated.

The Board also provides relief and remedies to our Nation's employers. For example, employers can turn to the Board for relief if a union commences a wildcat strike or refuses to bargain in good faith during negotiations. The NLRB has a long history of helping businesses resolve disputes efficiently. By preventing or resolving labor disputes that could disrupt our economy, the work that the Board does is vital to every worker and every business across the Nation.

That is why it is so important that we maintain a fully functional, five-member NLRB. I am proud of the fact that, just a little over a year ago, we were able to confirm members to completely fill the board for the first time in over a decade. Now, we need to fill a soon-to-be open seat so that the Board can continue to function effectively.

Ms. McFerran is not the first nominee for this seat. In September, the HELP Committee approved the nomination of a dedicated public servant, Sharon Block. Republicans and Democrats agreed on Ms. Block's reputation and qualifications, but her nomination was withdrawn in the face of circumstance beyond her control. As a result, Ms. Block will not have the opportunity to serve on the Board. Ms. Block is a tremendous public servant whose qualifications are unaffected and undiminished by the present circumstances and I look forward to Ms. Block's future service to our country.

I am heartened, however, by the President's decision to nominate Lauren McFerran. Ms. McFerran currently serves as Chief Labor Counsel and Deputy Staff Director on my HELP committee. I am proud to have her as a member of my staff; she has served the committee with excellence and